

Madame Chairperson and members of the committee,

I am Susan Kohler, Executive Director of the Area Agency on Aging for Missoula and Ravalli Counties. I am also the President of the Montana Area Agency on Aging Association.

I am here along with many of my colleagues to talk about the need to increase the Aging Services line item in the proposed Senior and Long Term Care Divisions budget. We believe the current allocation is woefully inadequate. We would like to see this line item increased to an additional 4 million each year for the next two years or 8 million for the biennium.

Our Association has put together a simple, but powerful packet that demonstrates the need for this increase. I would like to have you take a moment with me to review the contents of the packet.

- **The first page depicts** the 10 Area Agency's on Aging and their service area across Montana. Funding for Aging Services is distributed through the Senior and Long Term Care Division to each of the 10 Area Agencies on Aging through a formula that is based primarily on the number of elders living in each of the Area's. In turn, these dollars are distributed through the same formula to individual counties. These counties choose their priorities through a planning process that identifies needs with input from seniors, family, and providers. A wide array of services are provided through Senior Centers, County Councils on Aging, Home Health Agencies, Transportation providers, and others all in an effort to help seniors maintain their independence and dignity.
- In addition, this page shows you the total dollar amount each area would receive of the 4 million dollars after it is distributed through the formula with **no money supporting state staff or administration.**
- **On the second page,** each Area Agency, explains their areas needs and priorities for this additional funding. You will see and hear through later testimony how inadequate the current level of service is meeting the demand and how this request will be necessary to maintain and expand services to better meet current needs.
- **On the third page** is a chart that shows the various generations and their size in the year 2010.
 - I think you will agree that the baby boomers will constitute what we refer to as a Silver Tsunami.
 - SB155 is looking at funding a mechanism that would support this Silver Tsunami in the future through an Older Montanans Trust Fund. This is very important however, without the increase we are requesting for current demands, the Trust Fund will not be as effective in dealing with future

needs. Both requests are essential in order to take care of current needs and for the Trust Fund to be effective in the future.

The last page demonstrates the financial partnerships the Aging Network have established over the years to help support these services. The largest partner we have listed is in the "Others: category and includes:

- * County and or City Mill levies
- * Client Contributions
- * United Ways
- * Community donations and Fund raisers
- * Grants which are often one time only.

In fact, many areas have had to run mill levies in order to prevent the reduction in services! For example, Missoula would have had to establish a waiting list this year if the mill levy had not passed.

The blue line is the Federal Government's support and the last line is the State of Montana. **Currently, the State of Montana only supports Aging Services by 1.7 million** compared to over 9 million of other and 6.7 million by the federal government.

We are asking the State of Montana to become a stronger partner in our efforts to serve not only Montana's elders but their families and caregivers who are trying to keep their elders in their homes and communities.

Madame Chairperson and members of the committee you will be hearing additional testimony from those who support our request for the additional 8 million dollars above the current budget appropriation of 1.7 million. I hope you will join us in supporting this request.

I have also submitted a testimony by an adult child who had to move her parents into a larger community due to the lack of basic in home services.

Thank you for the opportunity to share with you our concern for the seniors and their families of Montana. Thank you for your consideration.